

AIR POUCH

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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM: AMEMBASSY, GUATEMALA

TO: The Dept. of State, Washington

SUBJECT: Joint Weeka No. 37 for State, Army and Air

SUMMARY

During the past week, the celebration of the Independence Day since the overthrow of the Communist-tyranny Government put a place of unity and popular rejoicing. The continuing political differences among the potential supporters of President Castillo have in the anti-Communist movement. The President and his advisers were actively at work on plans for the elections to the Constituent Assembly which he has promised soon, but despite this and his little diminished popularity with the crowds, politicians among his followers were impatient that there have been no signs of an energetic program or firm political guidance in the two weeks since Colonel MONTEON and Major OLIVA had resigned from the Junta. One group was understood to be laying plans to put it in the position to dictate to the President, while the anti-Communist parties and civic organizations came to a standstill in their unity efforts, failing to sign the pact forming the "National Anti-Communist Front" on schedule. This lack of united support naturally put the President in a difficult position in solving such pressing problems as Cabinet reorganization, unemployment, the political organization of the elections, and the term of office to which he is to be elected.

Meanwhile, the evacuation of the remnants of the Arbenz Administration which had taken asylum in foreign diplomatic missions continued steadily until there were only about 170 of the original 770 left. As was to be expected, ex-Foreign Minister TORIELLO and others began attacking the Castillo Government as a dictatorship as soon as they got out of the country.

DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

Independence Day Celebration Brings Mood of Popular Rejoicing:
The celebration of Guatemala's Independence Day, September 15, this year reflected the Guatemalan people's happiness that their country, despite all current difficulties, was at last free of Communist domination. Perhaps the largest crowd in recent Guatemalan history attended the ceremonies in the Olympic Stadium where President Castillo, in an oversize blue-and-white sash and flanked by ex-Junta members Montezón and Oliva, reviewed a parade of uniformed school children and soldiers. The crowd did not seem to mind the faulty organization of

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the affair and with good nature applauded the passing contingents, including that of the National Army which it had greeted with frosty silence at the Unification Day review only six weeks ago. The atmosphere that evening at the President's reception--where the Archbishop standing in scarlet robes near Castillo represented another aspect of the post-Arbenz era--was also one of holiday gaiety but as one Guatemalan there said: "I only wish this spirit would extend to El Gallito (a working-class quarter); a government popular only in the National Palace and Sixth Avenue doesn't last long." This was not to say that the holiday mood did not penetrate to the working man's home, but rather that unless his problems as well as those of the privileged classes were soon met the regime could not bank on continued popularity.

Continued Divisions in the Anti-Communist Movement: Despite the holiday spirit, there were continued signs during the week that Castillo was still not close to achieving unity of the anti-Communist movement behind his presidency. There were excellent reports that one influential group which had backed Castillo in his exile in Nicaragua in the war of Liberation last June, but was now dissatisfied by his "do-nothing" policy, was actively planning a move which would put it in a position to dictate to him--a development which would necessarily mean the further exclusion of other factions from a share in power and policy making. The anti-Communist political and civic organizations, still divided by their desire each to have priority in government jobs and other spoils, failed to sign the pact of alliance forming the Frente Anticomunista Nacional on schedule, thus raising further doubts as to whether they can achieve lasting unity. The President was also meeting with difficulty in getting qualified people to join the revised Cabinet which he hoped to announce shortly.

Into this situation, a further element of confusion was introduced by the return from his exile in El Salvador of General Miguel YDIGORAS Fuentes, who next to Castillo is probably the country's best-known anti-Communist figure. Castillo had tried to keep Ydigoras out of Guatemala by denying him a visa but the old General slipped in anyway and presented himself to the Supreme Court on September 13 with a request that his rights be protected. He disclaimed to the press any intention to enter politics at present, but there was little doubt that he could become the rallying point of anti-Communists opposed to Castillo and his personality is such that there is no reason to believe he would resist heading any anti-Communist movement that might lead him to the Presidency.

Supreme Court Decision Denies of Infraction: In a decision which may do much to cast an aura of tranquillity around the Castillo government, the Supreme Court on September 13 unanimously rejected

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the petition of Carlos ZACHRISSON Padilla for an injunction against the expropriation of his property under the provisions of Decree 68 (Weeka 36). The Court's decision, in substance, was that under the provisions of the Political Statute the right of amparo (injunction) did not exist and that the court, moreover, could not enjoin the government from taking security measures. The Court added that as the text of Decree 68 stated that it was a security measure, the Court was not competent to examine it. Thus an interpretation of the Political Statute was established that as long as the authorities described their actions as security measures the judiciary could not interfere. After the decision was handed down, the appellant's son who served as his attorney summed up the state of affairs which in his view was created by the decree:

"It can be said that there is no right of injunction or protection. Specifically, there are no individual guarantees, not even those which the Political Statute contains. Moreover, it can be said that by a presidential decree a person can be condemned without being heard."

The official confirmation that the present government was, from the legal viewpoint, a dictatorship was scarcely a surprise. However, the Supreme Court's decision did highlight the Constitutional problem that unless the proposed Constituent Assembly makes substantial changes in the Political Statute or writes a new Constitution at an early date, persons in Guatemala will not be assured of the right to appeal to the Courts for protection and there will be no legal barriers to the authorities when they choose to invoke security reasons for their actions.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Exodus of Persons in Asylum Nearly Complete: Following the departure of ex-President Arbenz for Mexico last week (Weeka 36) the exodus of the persons who took asylum in foreign missions after the fall of his government at the end of June continued rapidly. By September 16 there were only about 150 left in the Latin American missions of the approximately 770 who originally took asylum there. The principal groups were those in the Salvadoran and Chilean Embassies and 50 or more in the Argentine Embassy for whom there was no room on the Argentine planes which came last week. Most of those remaining were secondary figures, the exceptions being Alfredo GUERRA Borges, the Communist party's propaganda chief, and Leonardo CASTILLO Flores, Communist-line peasant leader, who were waiting to leave the Chilean Embassy. Special planes this week cleared out the Brazilian and Costa Rican Embassies.

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The group from the Brazilian Embassy was scheduled to be transported directly to Amapá, an isolated spot between the Amazon and the border of French Guiana, which was to serve, for all practical purposes, as a sort of miniature Siberia for these Guatemalan Communists and their sympathizers. A similar arrangement has been made in Guatemala where persons who have abandoned asylum have been transported to an isolated community on the edge of Lake Flores in the Petén, not to Poctún, as originally reported.

With the arrival of the refugees in other Latin American capitals, opposition against the Castillo government abroad began to increase, and grow. The local press did not give free coverage to those attacks on the government but did summarize a particularly vitriolic one in Mexico by ex-Foreign Minister Guillermo Toriello, whose main point was that the Arbenz Government was Communist-influenced and was locally regarded as pure gall.

Castillo Denies Guatemala is Seat of Plot Against Costa Rican Government: President Castillo on September 14 emphatically denied to a Washington Post reporter rumors that a movement to overthrow the Figueres Government in Costa Rica was being prepared in Guatemala and that airplanes had come here from a neighboring country (Honduras) for that purpose. He stated that he had already assured the Costa Rican Ambassador that Guatemala was preoccupied with the solution of serious internal problems and that no movement of any kind was being prepared against Figueres.

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cc: C.A.Missions & Routine

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